

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 13, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to respectfully urge you to fully integrate the promotion of human rights into your Administration's policy approach to North Korea. In particular, we ask that you swiftly appoint a person of "recognized distinction in the field of human rights" to serve as the Special Envoy for North Korea Human Rights Issues, as required by 22 U.S.C. 7817. We agree with the view expressed in the February 16, 2017 joint statement of Secretary Tillerson and the foreign affairs ministers of the Republic of Korea and Japan that we must "continue to draw international attention to the systemic, widespread, and gross violations of human rights in North Korea."

As the United States and our partners work to address the threat that the regime of Kim Jong-un poses to international security and stability through the development and testing of its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, the proliferation of weapons and other destabilizing activities, we must never forget—or allow the community of nations to forget—that the government in Pyongyang also poses a clear and present danger to its own citizens.<sup>1</sup>

The human rights situation in North Korea is unspeakably bad, which is precisely why the United States must continue to speak up about it with candor, clarity and courage. In our view, it is a moral imperative for the U.S. government to develop and execute a comprehensive plan to promote human rights in North Korea. This plan should include efforts to facilitate the dissemination of information inside North Korea that is not controlled by the Kim government. Providing the people of North Korea with facts and knowledge about their own country and the world serves as a counterweight to the endless barrage of false and self-serving propaganda generated by the regime.

In addition, promoting the rights of the North Korean people is sound national security policy for at least two reasons. First, there is a direct link between the North Korean government's violations of the rights of its citizens and the regime's threat to international peace. As Victor Cha and Robert L. Galluci observed in their January 2017 report for the George W. Bush Institute's Human

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., the North Korea chapter of the 2015 edition of the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, available at <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252983.pdf>; Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (February 2014), available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/108/66/PDF/G1410866.pdf?OpenElement>.

Freedom Initiative, entitled *Toward a New Policy and Strategy for North Korea*, “new data shows that revenues from North Korean human rights abuses”—including the export of slave labor—“are suspected to be used to fund nuclear proliferation activities.”<sup>2</sup> Second, and more broadly, a look to history confirms that governments that deprive their citizens of the most elemental rights are fertile ground for instability and conflict that adversely affect neighboring countries, the broader region, and the world.

With respect to the Special Envoy for North Korea Human Rights Issues, this position was created by Congress in the North Korea Human Rights Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-133). Congress made certain changes to the statutory framework when it reauthorized this law in 2008 (P.L. 110-346) and again in 2012 (P.L. 112-72). For example, the 2008 reauthorization added a requirement that the individual appointed as Special Envoy be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

The role of the Special Envoy is “to coordinate and promote efforts to improve respect for the fundamental human rights of the people of North Korea, including . . . the protection of those people who have fled [North Korea] as refugees.” The Special Envoy is required to report annually to Congress on the activities it has undertaken to fulfill its statutorily-prescribed responsibilities. Certain provisions of the North Korea Human Rights Act will expire at the end of Fiscal Year 2017, including this reporting requirement, and we strongly support the law’s reauthorization, as provided for in H.R. 2061, the *North Korean Human Rights Reauthorization Act of 2017*. We also believe that this annual report should be prepared in a timely and diligent manner, with relevant details made available to the public as appropriate.

In closing, we note that, on April 28, 2017, during a ministerial meeting of the U.N. Security Council on North Korea, Secretary Tillerson observed that there is a “moral dimension to this problem,” calling North Korea “a nation of sorrow, frozen in time.”<sup>3</sup> Even though the present is bleak, Secretary Tillerson said, the United States believes there can be a brighter future for the people of North Korea. We agree, and reiterate our hope that you will include the promotion of human rights as part of your comprehensive strategy toward North Korea.

Sincerely,

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://gwbcenter.imgix.net/Resources/gwbi-toward-a-new-policy-for-north-korea.pdf>, at page 4.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/04/270544.htm>.



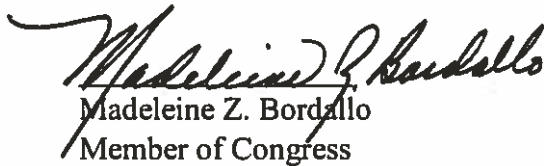
Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen  
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Joaquin Castro  
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Madeleine Z. Bordallo  
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Bobby L. Rush  
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Judy Chu  
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Eliot L. Engel  
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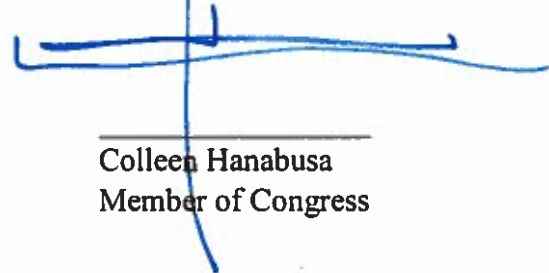
Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress



Colleen Hanabusa  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson, Secretary, U.S. Department of State